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LETTERS

ON

RELIGIOUS RETIREMENT,

MELANCHOLY,

AND

*Layhorne 9. 122
K.*

ENTHUSIASM.

——— Di ne hunc Ardorem mentibus addunt,
Euryale ? an sua cuique Deus fit dira Cupido ?

VIRG.

LONDON:

Printed for H. PAYNE and W. CROPLEY, at
Dryden's head, Pater-noster Row.

MDCCLXII.

LETTERS

RELIGIOUS RETIREMENT

MELANCHOLY

AND

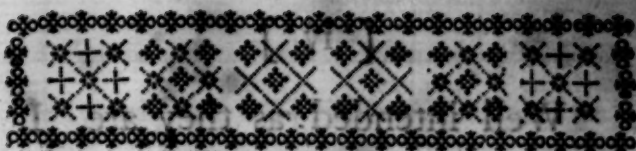
ENTHUSIASM.

— Di ne hunc Ardorem mentibus adhaere,
Euryale? an tua cuique Deos sit dūm Cupido?
Vire.

LONDON:

Printed for H. Payne and W. Groomer, at
Dyck's head, Paragon Row.

MDCCLXII.



TO
THE RIGHT REVEREND
WILLIAM
LORD BISHOP OF
GLOUCESTER.

MY LORD,

 HAVE no other motive
for offering Your LORD-
SHIP the following Letters, than
because they co-operate, however
feebly, with your own writings
in the defence of *rational* Reli-
gion.

Well

Well intended as they are, I hope they will not be altogether unacceptable to Your LORDSHIP; and that they may be serviceable to mankind, in preventing the delusions of Fanaticism, is the only wish of,

My Lord,

Your LORDSHIP'S

Most obedient Servant,

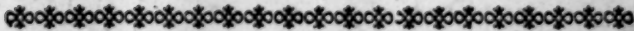
JOHN LANGHORNE.



L E T T E R S

O N

RELIGIOUS RETIREMENT, &c.



L E T T E R I.



WILL my amiable friend become a recluse? Shall we no longer be delighted with the graces of her elegant understanding, nor instructed by her refined and digested knowledge? Shall our devotion no more be strengthened by her natural and unaffected piety, more perswasive than the labours of the

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logical

logical divine? Is Virtue so sure of her cause, that she can part with such an advocate as CLEORA? Is Religion so prevalent, and so popular, that she should find no loss in the retreat of such a friend? The choice of life is, in general, an indifferent thing; but particular circumstances may make it a duty. The powers we receive from nature, were not given in vain: they were designed for peculiar functions; and if we neglect to exert them, we shall not answer the end of our being. CLEORA wishes not to *shine before men*; but that *light* which is given her, should be displayed for the encouragement of Piety, and the *glory* of him who gave it.—How far these ends may be answered by monastic solitude, I leave her to judge.

LET-



L E T T E R I I.

YOU have been so industrious, Madam, in the search of arguments to defend your determination, that you seem to have forgot those I offered against it. But though you may have overlooked mine, I will not pass by any that you have alleged; for it is not so necessary to add new rays to the understanding of CLEORA, as to prevent it from being dazzled by an intemperance of light.

Solitude, you say, is the nurse of devotion. You know, my fair friend, that the benevolent Creator of the universe has

made the duty of man to consist in serving his fellow-creatures. It is impossible, therefore, that our devotion should be rendered acceptable by those means, that throw us out of the province of active virtue. *Solitude is the nurse of devotion;* but the heart is not always to be trusted to itself. That devotion which is entirely mental, may in time degenerate into spiritual pride. It is by mixing in the business of life, and the connexions of society only, that we feel our weakness; and it is by Humility alone, that Piety can subsist.

“ In retirement,” you observe, “ there
 “ is least danger of falling from virtue;
 “ and it is the duty of a christian to flee
 “ from temptation.” To resist temptation, is the duty of a christian; but not
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to flee from society. Were it so, it would be equally incumbent on every individual; and man would revert to his primæval state—become a Solitary and a Savage.



L E T-



L E T T E R. III.

I AGREE with my amiable friend—
 The songs of SOLOMON are *pretty*
songs; and to be sure, Mr. ROMAINE'S
 Discourses on them are *quite ravishing*. I
 wish, however, this may be an innocent
 ravishment—pardon me, CLEORA! your
 retiring scheme alarmed me. When I
 considered your elegant sense, and strong
 reason, I thought you incapable of being
 infected by the *Modern Enthusiasm*; but
 when I found that your pious and sus-
 ceptible heart had been indulging, with
 ROMAINE, in the luxurious songs of So-
 lomon, I wondered not to find its serene
 piety

piety changed into irregular and intemperate raptures. Right devotion, CLEORA, is founded on reason, which teaches us to adore the FATHER of NATURE, for the benevolent purposes of all his works: it must, therefore, be rational and uniform, which, while the passions are its vehicle, it can never be; for these depending on the constitution of the body, will be various and uncertain; and we should be more or less devout accordingly as we might be affected by age, health or sickness. It is evident, that Piety cannot depend upon those faculties, which are liable to variation and decay: it must be established on the steady principle of reason, or it will be for ever fluctuating and inconsistent; despond-

ing

ing through apprehensions that disparage the mercies of the Creator, or exulting with a confidence unbecoming a dependent creature. Of this stamp is the piety of those deluded people, whose Religion is directed by the imagination. I have known an itinerant preacher come into a village, and hold forth to the poor inhabitants the frightful images of death and damnation, 'till a general panic has spread itself through the place, and the innocent rustics have shook with fears, which they could neither account for nor avoid.

The power of imagination, in religious matters particularly, is very great—Instances there have been of persons transported by it even to insanity—

fanity—instances, CLEORA, within my own knowledge — believe me, it is dangerous to indulge it.



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LET-



L E T T E R I V.

CAN it be necessary to distinguish light from darkness? As different are the workings of imagination, and the influences of the Divine Spirit. The first are easily distinguishable by the irregular sensations they produce—ever inconsistent, extravagant, and unequal, they disorder the frame of the mind, and destroy all propriety and consistency of conduct. Enthusiasm precludes the use of reason, and, therefore, is a species of madness; it depreciates virtue, and consequently hurts the cause of Religion; it fills the heart

heart with pride and overweening opinions ; with unreasonable triumphs and unaccountable fears. Can effects like these proceed from the Father of Light ? — from the spirit of that pure and dispassionate Being, whose harmonious and consistent works teach us a rational adoration of their Divine Creator ? Is it to be supposed, CLEORA, that the influences of the Divine Spirit should teach us to despise and to exclude the use of the noblest faculty that God has given us ? yet I never knew an Enthusiast that did not declaim against reason — all was to be referred to internal impulses ; and man was to become a mere machine, acted upon and impelled by powers not his own.

Such always has been the doctrine of
 Fanaticism — Excellent doctrine, that
 destroys the eternal obligations of mo-
 rality, and makes the Deity account-
 able for the impiety of all his creatures
 that are *void of Grace!*



LET



LETTER V.

THERE have been Enthusiasts,

Madam, in all ages, and in all Religions; and their sentiments and conduct have been much alike in all, from the Pythian Priestesses of antiquity, to the *green-apron'd Pythonissa* of our own days. Had Bishop LAVINGTON compared the Enthusiasm of all the Fanatics the world has heard of; I believe he would have found, that though it has assumed different forms, its qualities were essentially the same. When the heathen priestess supposed herself influenced by the power of her

God,

God, her imagination hurried her into the wildest extravagancies — she was convulsed, she foamed, she raved, she prayed, she preached. All this, my friend, was the effect of imagination, and not the operation of any evil spirit, as some good people have supposed. We meet with the same Enthusiasm amongst the modern Pagans.* Many of the Philosophers of old, by indulging the reveries of fancy, at length imagined that they were favoured with divine lights, and supernatural revelations.† They took the suggestions of their own sick brains, for the communications of spirits and genii; and no modern Methodist could believe himself more

* See Nieuhoff's Voyage to the East Indies.

† See Diogenes Laertius.

effectually *

effectually inspired. This delusion was communicated by the Philosophers to the Christians †; and the Apostles themselves had to contend against Enthusiasm, and admonish their converts not to believe every spirit *. In those dark and barbarous ages, when the religion of Christians consisted of little more than ridiculous ceremonies; when the ordinary influences of the Spirit of God, which, as Bishop WARBURTON ‡ justly observes, are to enlighten the understanding and to rectify the will; when these, I say, seemed to be suspended, then, CLEORA, did Fanaticism spread her black wings over the earth,

† Coloss. ii. 8.

* 1 John. iv. 1.

‡ See Dr. Warburton's Sermons, preached before the Society of Lincoln's Inn.

and

and EGYPT, the ancient nurse of superstition, was her favourite haunt.

Should I recount to you, my amiable friend, the various effects of Enthusiasm, as they lie scattered through the history of mankind; the miseries and the absurdities it has produced, would shock your humanity or provoke your indignation—Good God! what outrages against reason, and thy pure religion, did it commit in the thirteenth century! when the extravagant FRANCIS preached to swallows and fishes; and the diabolical DOMINICUS founded the inquisition—yet these, my friend, had more followers than WHITFIELD or WESLEY.* The same Fanatic spirit

* See VOLTAIRE's Account of Religious Orders.

made LOYOLA form *the mischievous society of Jesus*; and XAVERIUS establish its power in the Indies.*

The JANSENISTS, though the greatest enemies to the JESUITS, were as rank Enthusiasts. What ridiculous work did they make at the tomb of their ABBOT DE PARIS? — The reformed Religion has not been without its Fanatics, from JACOB BEHMEN to his brethren of MOORFIELDS.

In short, CLEORA, whenever we give up Reason to the Chimæras of

* See STINSTRA's pastoral letters.

D imagination,

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imagination, let us pretend to what
impulses we please, we are no better
than Enthusiasts.



LET-



L E T T E R. VI.

RELIGIOUS MELANCHOLY was the daughter of ENTHUSIASM and SUPERSTITION; she was nursed, by her mother, in the cell of a DOMINICAN convent; and her only food was bread and water. As the parents had no other view for their daughter, than the inheritance of immortality, she was never instructed in human learning; for it was a maxim with them, that Ignorance is the mother of Devotion, and that enlightened reason serves only to cavil against the impulses of Heaven. From her mother, MELANCHOLY in-

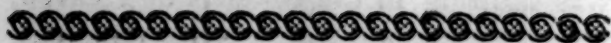
herited gloominess and fear ; and from her father, disordered and unequal passions, flights, raptures, and reveries— She spent her days in mortification, and her nights in terror ; for she was taught to believe, that her Devotion would be acceptable to her God, in proportion as it was distressful to herself. From that persuasion, she passed the greatest part of her life in penal austerities : but, as she was the child of ENTHUSIASM, she was sometimes visited with a gleam of fanatic joy, which shone through the gloom of her cell ; and, during those intervals, she asserted that she was in Heaven. Those intervals, however, as they were too powerful for a mortal mind, were very short and very rare : her exhausted spirits were afterwards reduced to the lowest languor ;

guor ; and she, who, the last moment, was exulting in the ecstasies of Heaven, was now aghast on the brink of Hell.

Such was the life of Religious MELANCHOLY ; till the benevolent Father of Nature, pitying her undeserved miseries, and weary of her preposterous devotion, delivered the innocent wretch from that being she had received in vain.



L E T-



L E T T E R. VII.

NO, CLEORA! I exclude not penitential sorrow from the duties of Religion—it is necessary in its place. But she whose life has been uniformly devoted to the service of Him who gave it, what has she to do with penitential sorrow? It can only be requisite in the change from profligacy to virtue; and to suppose it otherwise acceptable to God, were to reproach him.

Religion, my friend, wears not the habit of monastic melancholy, nor delights she in the sacrifice of penal misery.

The

The Divine Goodness could never intend, that wretchedness should be annexed to piety ; and it were impious to suppose, that he delights in the torment of his creatures. The ridiculous severities practised in the church of ROME, do not less blaspheme the perfections of the Almighty, than they reproach the reason of those deluded or designing people that maintain them. The voice of Religion is the voice of Joy ; *her ways are the ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.* Would the Almighty, whose principal aim is the welfare of his creatures, have appointed them a rule of life inconsistent with their happiness ? Could the unenlightened heathens pronounce virtue to be its own reward ; and shall not we, *to whom life and immortality is brought to light,*

light, find a pleasure in the practice of it proportionably greater?

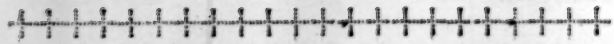
Our holy Religion, perhaps, has not suffered more from the attacks of open violence, than from the folly or treachery of her own professors: when she is disguised in a gloomy and forbidding aspect, charged with penal severities, and excluded from innocent pleasures; every man who consults his own happiness, would rather shun her as a *Phantom*, than seek her as a *Friend*. How different is the picture which the amiable and eloquent Apostle gives us of her! He represents her, what she really is, as a perpetual source of joy—*Rejoice*, says he, *evermore*; and again *I say, rejoice*—Nay, when involved in almost all the calamities that nature could suffer,

suffer, or tyranny inflict, the hopes of Religion still support him, and make him superior to every distress: *I am filled with comfort, says he, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation: In our outward circumstances indeed, we are as men dying; but, behold, we live! as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.*

How different, my friend, is this rational and chearful spirit from the gloomy superstition and enthusiasm of our modern Saints!

E

L E T-



L E T T E R V I I I .

YOUR conduct, CLEORA, appears every way so exemplary, that I am at a loss to divine what temptation you desire to avoid by your proposed retirement. Is it that you think conversing in the world, implies too great a confidence in your own strength? Be diffident of this—but despise not the active powers of Reason and Understanding, which, as well as those of Grace, flow from the Divine bounty—However, trust with a full assiance in that all-powerful and all-gracious Being, who will certainly enable you to *do* and *be* whatever

whatever is necessary to procure you his approbation.

Our mutual wants, which cannot be supplied with any comfort but in a social state, and the strong instinctive bias that way impressed upon our hearts, shew, that HEAVEN intended us for society ; and can you doubt that Supreme Wisdom has fitted you for what itself designed you ? Can the Sincere of heart be apprehensive, that their virtue, their Religion, may meet with any fatal assaults, when supported by that Power which shall re-animate the dead ?

If I know you at all, you are in no danger from criminal attacks : but there is some shadow of reason for fearing, that you might possibly be led into *Dis-*

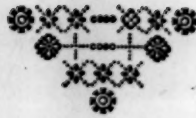
sipation, by following the fashionable world—but, pray, is there no alternative? Cannot you join sometimes in the innocent diversions of the polite, and shun the foolish ones? Cannot you give yourself some relaxation from the important duties of life, without making pleasure your business? Where the crime is only in the excess, cannot you be moderate? Were you fixed in solitude, you would find an innocent inclination, the desire of company, more troublesome and harder to be conquered, than any improper desire you can figure to yourself, of the pleasures of a gay life. The reason of this is obvious; the one is a natural inclination, the other an artificial one: and I need not tell you, that what-

ever

ever is agreeable to uncorrupted nature, is right.

If you would seek a retreat from the passion of love, which you observe to have done some harm in the world, you must then go into a Desert indeed, which no other human foot can enter: and even there you would be sensible, that *it is not good for you to be alone*—But as this is impossible, you could not be such a recluse but that passion would probably find its way to you; and it is observed to be strongest in persons of a devout frame of mind: the same sensibility which kindles the ardours of Devotion, renders the heart susceptible likewise of human love. We see many persons, who had much better have
given

given some share of their affections to worthy objects here below, than have afflicted themselves with fruitless troubles which the God of Nature never meant them; much better have become valuable wives, and prudent mothers, than proud censorious Devotees!



L E T-



L E T T E R I X.

I HOPE my amiable friend is not arrived at such a pitch of austerity, as to think that her whole life should be a continued scene of mortification and self-denial. The Divine Wisdom has so formed this lower part of the creation, that almost every thing in it serves our use, or ministers to our delight. All his works bear the marks of Benevolence—Consider every thing that He has made; and, behold, it is good! should we not then enjoy the good things of this world with temperance and decency? Should we not,

not, with a due sense of the mercies of the Giver, really honour Him more, than if we should afflict ourselves with perpetual penances? “ We
 “ are commanded, indeed, to take up
 “ our Cross; but we are no where
 “ commanded to seek it. If we suffer
 “ afflictions, we should bear them
 “ with patience; but if we are hap-
 “ pily free from them, we may pi-
 “ ously rejoice in that freedom.”*

The love of God should always pre-
 side in our hearts; but this great rule
 complied with, He has allowed, nay,
 designed, that the inferior desires He
 has implanted in us should be mo-

* Dr. Lyttleton.

derately gratified. Of this there needs be no stronger evidence, than that He has implanted them; for Eternal Wisdom does every thing for some good end.

What are all the austerities of some Devotees among us, better than the Hair-Shirts and Scourges of a more ancient date? Superstition may vary its form, but its folly is still the same. May not the Immortal Judge say — “Who hath required these things at your hands? Am I a *Moloch*, who delight to be worshipped only with sighs and groans? Have I commanded you to be virtuous, for my own benefit, or for yours? Have I not enjoined you the virtues of *Meekness*, *Content*,

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“ and *Cheerfulness* ; and promised to
“ make you happy evermore, for hav-
“ ing in some measure made yourselves
“ happy, in the transient scene of
“ your probation ?”



LET-



L E T T E R. X.

THE independence of your fortune cannot justify your retreat. Wealth may exempt you from the laborious duties of life, but it adds to the civil and the social. Consider, CLEORA, that God, who has put into your hands the means of beneficence, will require an account of your Stewardship. Those who are possessed of superior knowledge or fortune, have their duty plainly pointed out to them, in the instruction of ignorance, and the relief of indigence. And will you fly from this delightful task? Will you

leave the industrious poor, to whom your bounty and protection, by being long extended to them, are become necessary? Will you give them up to the persecution of fortune, and the oppression of tyranny? Will you no longer go with *Charity* and with *Pity*, into the solitary, the seldom visited mansions of misery and distress? Behold! your Lord *is a stranger, or naked, or sick, or a prisoner!* yet, how shall he apply to you for relief? *Your Dwelling stands not on the side of the way.** Behold this wretched mourner! her widowed years are deprived of her only hope and support, in her only child! Alas! her aged heart will break—Where is the

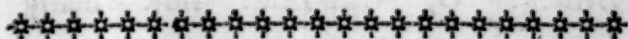
* Homer.

tender, the sensible, the beneficent CLEORA? for she will comfort her afflicted neighbour. No — CLEORA is fled into a remote solitude, and cannot be informed of her distress. See these poor uninstructed children! the labour of their parents can no more than supply them with bread — They shall never be able to read their duty in the book of life; CLEORA, who would have procured them Instruction, knows not of their ignorance. CLEORA has forsaken the province of public virtue: her presence no longer revives the spirit of the wretched, nor awes the licentiousness of the prophane. Consider, my fair friend, how you shall be able to defend yourself against the force of these reflections, in the silent thought-

thoughtfulness of your retirement. Believe me, they would be a more just cause of sorrow and remorse, than any you can at present suggest to yourself.



LET-



L E T T E R X I.

I AM bound, by the laws of Friendship, as well as by the love of Truth, to guard my CLEORA against every wrong opinion, as well for my own sake as for hers—for, believe me, Madam, I have even esteemed the advantage of your friendship among the first blessings of my life.

Wtith thee conversing, I forget all time;
All Seasons, and their change.

Your friendship, which, like the light of the heavenly bodies, has been ever pure, steady and permanent, shall it be
buried

buried with the rest of your social virtues? O, CLEORA! how many evils would flow from your retreat!

But let me for a moment suppose you in your retirement — You begin the day in the same manner you have ever done, with addressing your thanks and prayers to the Eternal Providence. When this pleasing task is performed, I suppose you spend the rest of the morning in religious studies; and the evening, for variety, you pass in walking and contemplation. These are all the exercises your situation can admit of; and were you of an indolent and inactive disposition, perhaps, these might be sufficient — But, you do not know your
own

own heart, if you think you can be long satisfied with a life like this. —

Be assured, that the sameness of it would soon be disgustful, and languor and weariness unavoidably ensue.

On the other hand, give me leave to suppose you in a state more agreeable to nature, and the design of Providence — let me consider you as the mother of a family — your day is now diversified by various employments, and your attention called forth by different cares. The oeconomy of your house, and the instruction of your children, (for you should not leave that entirely to Tutors, be they ever so distinguished for their probity and learning) the direction

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of

of your servants, and your attention to your husband, with many other domestic duties, will leave no languid vacuity either in your time or thoughts — but, then, to look forward to the end of your cares — to see your children exerting themselves, in their several stations, with that Benevolence and Integrity, which by your cultivation grew up with them, and which are now essential parts of their disposition—to behold this, were delightful indeed!

And is not this to serve your Creator as he ought to be served? Is not this preferable to the life of those *unprofitable servants*, who spend their days in monastic dullness——

——in

— in the dark and dire abode,
Where FOLLY mourns in SUPERSTI-
TION's chain ;
And Priests, devoutly vain,
Forfake each virtue to adore their
God ?





LETTER XII.

*ALMOST all the wrong notions
of Religion proceed from mis-
taken apprehensions of God.*

When we look up from these man-
fions of mortality, to that awful
Being who fills universal nature, we
cannot but be afraid. That reve-
rence we owe him, and which the
contemplation of his infinite Powers
and Perfections justly excites, is apt,
in the superstitious, to degenerate
into slavish fear. Fear always arises
from

from the apprehension of evil; and the worship it offers to that Being from whom the evil is apprehended, necessarily reproaches Him as the author of it. How preposterous then, nay, how impious, is the devotion of those Christians who sacrifice to their God with the groans of misery! who devote the day, which he has lighted up and adorned for their use and pleasure, to penal mortification; and the Night, whose curtain he has let down for their repose, to watchful anxiety!

To avoid this error, nothing more is necessary than to form a right notion of the will of God—let us consider Him as our Father and Creator,

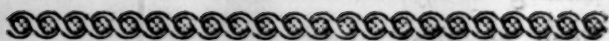
ator, whose Benevolence brought us into being; and who, for the comfort and support of this being, has supplied us with every thing necessary or delightful. *The will of God, then, is to dispense happiness;* and whatever makes us miserable, counteracts that will; consequently, all penal severities in the exercise of Religion, all melancholy and desponding fears, are injurious to his goodness, and absurd in his worship.

Be this truth, CLEORA, for ever present with you, that the end of Providence is to make you happy; and that it is your duty to co-operate

operate with the Divine will, by taking every means that may contribute to that end.



L E T-



L E T T E R. XIII.

SUFFER me a little to extend and illustrate the thoughts contained in my last. *The will of God, I observed, was to dispense happiness.* It is, my friend! this truth is visible in all his works; and written in such characters, that *He who runneth may read.* It was for this end alone, that he appointed us a law: for what other motive should induce him to do it? Can our Righteousness or our Goodness assist him? by no means—infinitely happy and secure in his own perfections, he wants not the aid,

aid, and cannot fear the enmity, of man. Such, then, is his unspeakable goodness, that he exacts no obedience from us, but what is necessary to our own felicity. The happiness of man is founded in society; and without the virtues which the Divine Laws enjoin, Society could not subsist.

When the Almighty gave his Laws to the Israelites by the legation of MOSES, each command had a manifest tendency to the preservation and peace of that people. Difference of Religion has always been the cause of differences in civil life—The ISRAELITES, from their long residence in *Egypt*, had fallen into all the superstitions of that idolatrous people; and the Gods

H they

they worshipped, were more in number than their Tribes. Hence, being disunited in Religion, they became so in Government; and were continually torn by Factions, and disordered with Jealousy. The first commandment, therefore, that they received from the true God, enjoined them to an union of belief; and, "Thou shalt have none other Gods but me," was a precept which procured that Peace and Harmony among them, that was the foundation of their future ease and prosperity. The Second Command was a supplement to the first; and entirely banished Idolatry, by cutting off the adoration of Images, without which it could not possibly subsist. The third taught them a new and unheard of Reverence

rence to their God, by prohibiting them to mention his name, except upon the most important occasions, and in the most solemn manner. This Reverence was the foundation of their obedience to the commands that followed; all which, by enforcing Humanity, Justice, and Truth, procured, in consequence, the peace, the safety, and the happiness of every individual.

But if the old Law was calculated for the benefit of those who were subject to it, the Christian Dispensation will appear infinitely more so. Our Blessed Saviour and his Apostles have laid down such a System of morals, and have carried human virtue to such a pitch of excellence and

purity, as was, till then, neither conceived nor thought of. Men are now taught to knit together in Society with mutual affection, and to unite themselves in the delightful Bond of brotherly love. In short, all the Christian Doctrines and Precepts, breathe so amiable, so delightful a spirit, that it would be for the advantage of Society to cultivate and establish them, exclusive of every prospect of future reward.

Thus, my friend, while our Heavenly Father treats us, not as servants, but as sons; while a parental kindness is visible in all his intentions; shall we not thankfully and chearfully enjoy the blessings he has appointed us? shall we make that
yoke

yoke painful, which he has declared to be easy; and aggravate the burthen, which he has appointed to be light?



L E T -



L E T T E R. XIV.

THE affliction of innocence, is the most painful sight in the world; and though that affliction be voluntary, proceeding from mistaken Piety, it is still certainly very pitiable.

In the early part of my life, I had the happiness to be acquainted with ELEANORA. You know her, my friend: it was impossible to live within her circle, and not know ELEANORA; the collected and expressive

pressive sweetness of her aspect, and the tender sensibility of her heart, made her universally beloved and admired.

This amiable person, about the age of nineteen, became a prey to the monster *Superstition*. She had been induced by a maiden aunt to go several times to a conventicle. I observed her cheerfulness abated, and imputed the change to want of health; till one evening, when I visited her, and, thinking to divert her melancholy humour, ventured to ask her for a song — She started at the proposal, and — “What,” says she, “would you have me sing? enough has been given to vanity” —

“vanity”—’Twas in vain that I represented to her, the innocence of such an amusement—in vain that I told her, it was necessary for the mind to suspend its attention, and vary its pursuits; that it could not be more agreeably or more innocently relaxed, than by music; and that even the exercises of Devotion, by being too assiduously repeated, would become languid and unaffecting.

ELEANORA continued to encourage a kind of stupifying melancholy, while her good aunt and her fanatic Teacher, mutually blessed each other for having, as they termed it, *brought a Soul to a sense of her sins.* That heaviness

heaviness which hung upon her heart, they told her was *the first fruits of the spirit*; and that to endeavour to divert it, would be *fighting against God*: that she must wait, with patience, *till the great work was wrought in her*; and that she should soon experience the impulse of the spirit, *in the blessed assurance of her salvation*. In short, with this and such like Cant, did they almost turn the head of this pious young lady — She waited in vain for those extraordinary *convictions* and *sensations*, which they told her she must feel, or be a *Reprobate*; for that, *without experience, no one should see the Lord*.

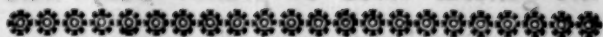
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At length her Melancholy affected
her constitution; and she languished
away in the bloom of life, a Sacrifice
to FANATICISM.



L E T-



L E T T E R X V .

I KNEW you would be affected with the story of poor ELEANORA; but I did not expect, at the same time, to find you making motions towards your removal to B—: what is there in B—more acceptable to your Creator, than in MOUNT SION, or in JERUSALEM, or even *in this city*? THAT POWER, whose existence is universal, must be present to hear, and ready to protect you, in every place alike. HE, who at once receives the united worship of all his works, is His favour to be

courted, by a gloomy retreat from the general voice of praise? HE, who reads the language of every heart, needeth He the silence of solitude to distinguish sounds?

If I rightly recollect the situation of B—, it is one of the most romantic places I ever beheld. The house, I think, stands in the bottom of a narrow valley, whose sides are so beset with tall woods, that it is impossible to perceive it till you are within a very few paces of it—And are there not some remains of a ruin'd monastery, at a small distance from the house; through whose broken arches you behold a lake of water, which, excepting the wild fowl that haunt it,

it, is the only moving object near the place ?

Such a Hermitage, CLEORA, might do well as a retreat for the recollection of a day ; but to pass a whole life in it, would be unnatural ; and to do it without misery, impossible.



LET-



L E T T E R X V I .

YOU astonish me, CLEORA! Is it possible you can believe, that any of the vain pretenders, of our times, to such an Inspiration as the Apostles enjoyed, are really possessed of it?

When we speak of Inspiration as subsisting now, we do not mean such Instruction as the Apostles received from Heaven, whereby new truths were revealed; we mean *the Divine Grace and Assistance, whereby Truths*

Truths already revealed operate, if we be not wanting to ourselves, to our spiritual benefit.

The Apostles did not barely affirm that they were inspired, but wrought great and convincing miracles to prove it. Now, we might very safely put the matter to this Test, and call upon these pretenders to Inspiration, to shew the seal of their Commission in some wonderful supernatural work — But the truth is, not only that miracles are ceased, as no longer necessary; but that if a miracle should now be wrought, it would not prove an Inspiration, like that of the Apostles, in the Worker; because the Scripture, whose Canon was long
since

since compleated, declares its own sufficiency in every thing necessary to salvation, and pronounces an Anathema against Him who shall *add to it* or take away the least part of it.

Neither do we come to a right understanding of difficult texts, by inspiration; for what is necessary to conduct us to Eternal Happiness, is to be found in the plain passages of scripture. In this respect, the way is so easy, that the *way-faring man*, if possessed of an humble heart, *shall not err therein*. Then he errs, when he wanders from the beaten way; when he pretends to penetrate mysteries; when he seeks to know
more

more than the Fundamentals of Christianity; or when he would lay new foundations. Difficult Texts of Scripture must be interpreted in the same manner, as difficult passages in other writings; by a knowledge of the original languages, and of the Customs of those times when they were written; by considering the connexion of the discourse, or the analogy of the system, as well as by consulting the opinions of learned men who have made these things their study.

But you allege, that though outward miracles are ceased, yet inward ones are not. I answer, that there is no occasion for a Miracle, to enable us to know what we are to be-

K

lieve

lieve and do ; and Heaven will not do what is unnecessary—The aids of Grace, for the performance of our duty, are indeed supernatural ; but these are ordinarily dispensed.

Be pleased also, my good friend, to reflect, how much easier it is to counterfeit the inward, than the outward operations of the spirit : how easy it is for persons, who have a sufficiency of forehead, and a fluency of tongue, to pretend they are inspired. The rapidity of their language, flowing from a vain glorious confidence, seems wonderful ; and the enthusiastic fury of their elocution is very catching, not only with persons of weak, but with those also
of

of warm and zealous minds. But the Priestess of Apollo was equally rapid and impetuous; and had, if possible, a greater degree of the *Furor entheus*, than any modern Methodist :

Swift starts the colour from her cheeks; her looks

Human no more: her hair the holy fillets

Bursts: her big heart swells with the foaming rage.

Her eye darts fire, and thunder tones her voice.

Poor and wretched is that boasted Inspiration, which cannot give its subjects, however illiterate, the know-

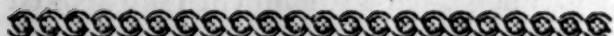
ledge of the original languages of the scripture ; or, indeed, a competent acquaintance with their own.

Though our Enthusiasts seem very much averse to Popery, yet they hold some of the worst doctrines of it—I speak not now of their Uncharitableness, their indiscriminate condemnation of all who differ from them—But what falls under the article we are now considering, is, their pretence to a plenary Inspiration, which is only another name for Infallibility, one of the rotten pillars of the Romish Church. All the difference is, that instead of one Pope, these find a thousand, in their ignorant Teachers, whom they consider

as so many Gods; while their crude
and undigested Preachments are looked
upon as oracles.



LET-



L E T T E R. XVII.

I AM of opinion, that a lady had better employ her time on the plain doctrines of Christianity, than on such as are abstruse: but since you desire some account of the doctrine of predestination, I will give it you, lest some of the self-commissioned Teachers should infuse into you such opinions, as dishonour the Father of the Universe.

They who believe in *absolute predestination*, that is to say, they who believe that the Almighty has fore-
doomed

doomed any part of mankind to eternal misery, make the Supreme Being the worst and most arbitrary of tyrants. They draw him in as bad a light, as Satan himself can be conceived; nay, in a worse; for thus they represent to themselves Infinite Power armed to do evil—Horrid Blasphemy! CLEORA, need I say more? This is the doctrine of God's *elect*! of his *beloved*! of his *Saints*! This is the burden of the song at *Moorfields* — “ Gracious
 “ art thou, O Lord! for some Thou
 “ hast chosen to be heirs of salvation;
 “ and some Thou hast damned to
 “ everlasting misery, *before they are*
 “ *born*, and *before they have done*
 “ *good or evil.*”

Great

Great God ! pardon the blasphemy
of thy faints !

Is it possible, my friend, that the
ALL-WISE BEING should send his
rational Creatures into this world as
Probationers, and yet have no regard
to their works ? Has he not, on
the contrary, declared, that *He will*
judge us according to our works ? Has
he not assured us, that *He would have*
all men be saved and come to the know-
ledge of the truth ? To what purpose
are all his earnest exhortations, and
melting intreaties to us to make a
right use of our time here, if our
conduct be quite out of the account ?
As for the ninth Chapter to the Ro-
mans, it describes the advantages
which God, of his good pleasure,
bestows

bestows upon one particular nation, in preference to another; the reasons of which may be obvious to his Providence, though they are not quite so to us. This passage does not in the least relate to the happiness or misery of individuals in another life; for the great argument the Apostle is here insisting on, is, that of Heaven's rejecting the Jewish nation, for a time, from the privilege of being his people on account of their infidelity, and receiving the Gentiles in their stead; which he illustrates by a parallel instance of the blessings which the *Israelites* descended from *Jacob* enjoyed, in preference to the *Edomites* descended from *Esau*.

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It would be needless for me to point out to you, my CLEORA, the miserable consequences which this doctrine may produce. Be it sufficient to tell you, that it has driven many unhappy creatures to Despair, upon whose weak Credulity the Ignorance or the Baseness of Fanatics had imposed the belief of it.



L E T-



L E T T E R. XVIII.

A PERSON who does not believe in absolute predestination, will not easily be brought to think, that he has an *infallible assurance* of his own salvation. This is another of the audacious doctrines of Fana-ticism.

Certainly the highest point we can arrive at here, is a well grounded hope consequent upon a good life. This may be called a moral, though not an absolute certainty; for since the assistance of God will not be

wanting to such as live in his fear, when they have long behaved as becometh Christians, they may reasonably hope, that they *shall retain their integrity, and not let it go* in the last trial.

The Apostle advises the best of Christians to take heed lest they fall; and that, by falling, he here means falling finally, is plain from the connexion of the discourse.

The argument, which the Author of *Observations on the Conversion and Apostleship of Saint Paul*, makes use of, is decisive in this point, as well as with respect to Faith and Works.

“ If

“ If any one imagines,” says he,
 “ that he sees any difference between
 “ the doctrines of *St. James* and
 “ *St. Paul*, concerning Justification
 “ by Faith or by Works ; let him
 “ only consider these words in the
 “ first Epistle to the Corinthians —
 “ *but I keep under my body and bring*
 “ *it into subjection, lest that, by any*
 “ *means, when I have preached to*
 “ *others, I myself should be a cast-*
 “ *away.*

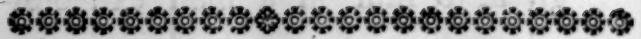
“ If *St. Paul* had believed, or
 “ taught, that Faith without Works
 “ was sufficient to save a Disciple of
 “ Christ, to what purpose did he
 “ keep under his body, since his sal-
 “ vation was not to depend upon *that*
 “ being subjected to his Reason, but
 “ merely

“ merely upon the Faith he profes-
 “ sed? His Faith was firm; and so
 “ strongly founded upon the most
 “ certain conviction, that he had no
 “ reason to doubt its continuance :
 “ How could he then think it possi-
 “ ble, that while he retained that
 “ saving Faith, he might neverthe-
 “ less be a cast-away? or if he sup-
 “ posed that his election and calling
 “ was of such a nature, as that it
 “ irresistibly impelled him to Good,
 “ and restrained him from Evil ;
 “ How could he express any fear,
 “ lest the lusts of his body should
 “ prevent his Salvation? Can such
 “ an apprehension be made to agree
 “ with the notion of absolute predef-
 “ tination, ascribed by some to *St.*
 “ *Paul*? He could have no doubt,
 “ that

“ that the Grace of God had been
“ given to him in a most extraordi-
“ nary manner; yet we see, that
“ he thought his Election was not
“ so certain, but that he might fall
“ from it again through the natural
“ prevalence of bodily appetites, if
“ not duly restrained by his own vo-
“ luntary Care.”



L E T-



L E T T E R X I X .

BY Divine Grace, my friend, we mean the favour and Concurrence of Heaven assisting our endeavours in the exercise of our duty.

Agreeably to this, our Redeemer tells us, that *without him we can do nothing*; that *his Grace is sufficient for us*; that *we may do all things through his Holy Spirit strengthening us*.

The

The Enthusiasts go farther—They look upon Divine Grace as a Power, not only exciting, but irresistibly commanding the will, actuating them as machines, and doing every thing in order to their Salvation, without their consent or concurrence—Slight, half-thinkers may imagine, that thus they do the greater honour to the merits of Christ; and to the operations of the Holy Spirit: but to suppose and to make a merit of believing in an Oeconomy of Grace that is inconsistent with the wisdom of God, and the plain dictates of his word, is really to dishonour Him.

We know experimentally, that we have some degree of liberty of will; and that we have a right to inves-

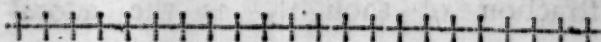
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tigate truth by reason and argument. We may appeal also to Scripture, which in the same text where it speaks of *God's working in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure*, calls upon us *to work out our own Salvation*; and elsewhere exhorts us *to obey the truth*, and *not to resist or quench the Spirit*. Now if it is not in our power to resist the Spirit, if we cannot help obeying the Gospel, these are vain words.



• L E T -



L E T T E R X X.

BY the command to *pray always*, and to *pray without ceasing*, some men have been led to think, that they ought to bestow their whole time upon this duty, to be continually in the depths of Meditation, and the fervours of Devotion — But though some of these men may think piously, they are all of them far from thinking soberly.

To confute this opinion, I need only observe that the mind of man, in this imperfect state, cannot by any

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means

means *perpetually* bear such an abstraction of thought, as the adoration of God requires; that the necessities of our bodies, and the labours of life, ask a great portion of time; that by a seasonable attendance to these, we are serving God in the most acceptable manner; and that he is really more honoured, when we approach him at fixed seasons, with minds detached from the cares of life, and properly prepared for devotion, than if we should always be calling on his name.

No Enthusiast in the world can *pray always*, in the strict, literal sense of the words; therefore, by praying always, is only meant that we ought to make prayer our constant and daily practice; and that we ought never to neglect or incapacitate

- incapacitate ourselves for that sublime and delightful intercourse, which we have the honour to hold with the Sovereign of Nature.

Another expression in the passage just referred to, deserves also explanation --- I mean that of *praying in the spirit*. By *praying in the spirit*, or, *with the spirit*, as it might be as well translated, is meant that sincerity and attention which ought always to accompany this duty. A prayer is not barely to be repeated, but to be offered up. We must raise our hearts to the Deity, and keep them fixed on that supreme object, with such a pious reverence as becomes dependent Creatures in the presence of their Creator.

It

It becomes us, indeed, to put up our Prayers rather with a composed affection, than with the excesses of passion ; lest *we speak unadvisedly* to the Father of Wisdom, and *offer the sacrifice of Fools*.

To avoid any impropriety of this kind, a well-composed form of prayer is preferable to all extemporary effusions.

No argument can be brought from the church of Corinth in *St. Paul's* time, to shew that it ought to be conducted in the same manner now. For *then* they really prayed by Inspiration ; *now* that Inspiration no longer subsists—Surely a congregation may better join in a form of prayer, which they know to be a good one;

one; than in a suddenly conceived effusion, which, for ought they know, may, in the next expression, be blasphemous, or, at least, absurd.

Adieu! my dear and amiable friend
—May that Power, to whom your
Piety will always be acceptable, lead
you along the paths of Truth and
Reason, to his Immortal Light!



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